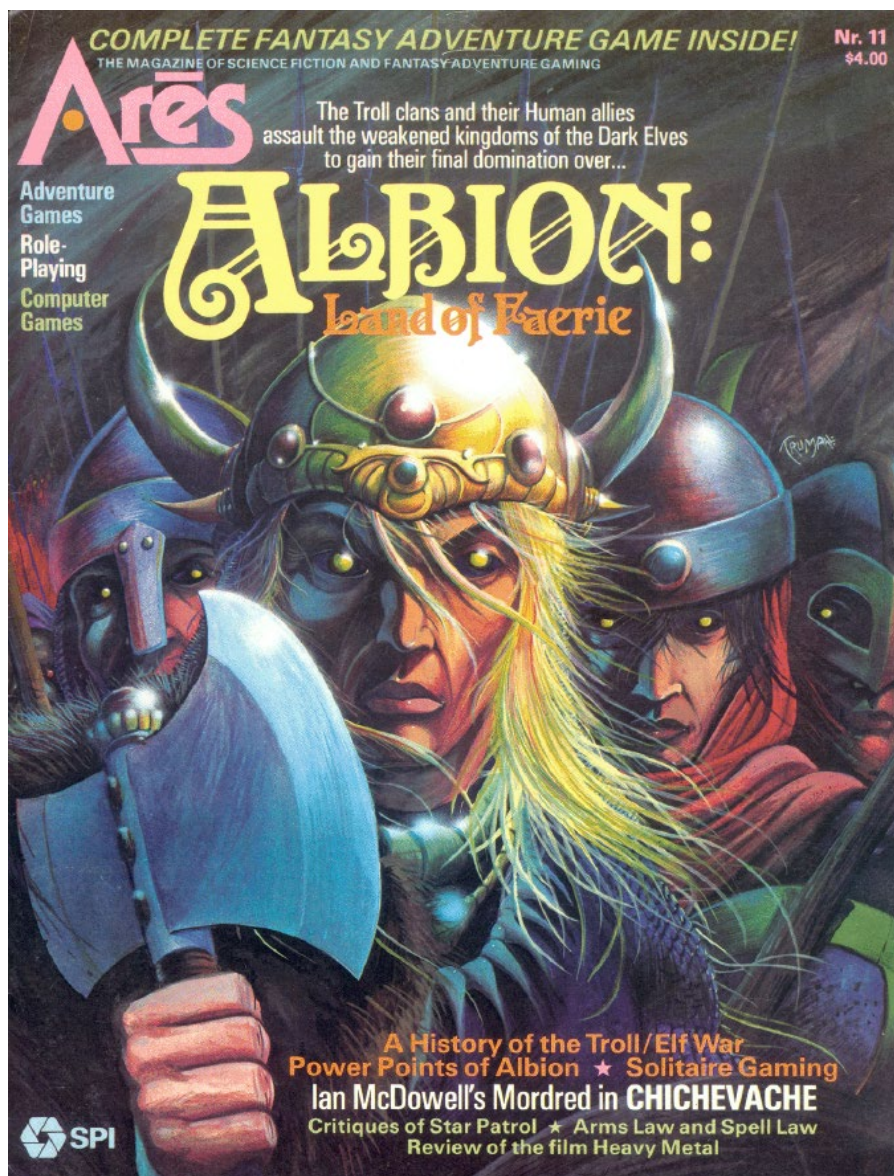


# Timothy Truman: Working for SPI

by Russ Gifford



**Editor's Note:** *By the mid-1980s, Timothy Truman became one of the more famous of the up-and-coming class of comic book artists, illustrating first the "Tales of Draco's Tavern" in the back of one of First Comics original efforts, followed by co-creator status on the breakthrough comic GrimJack. Later he would create Scout and numerous other great works. But in 1980, both he and the other big name at First Comics, Howard Chaykin, were seeing their earliest professional work reach an international audience -- via SPI Games!*

*Yes. These giants in the comic world were recognized and given their first big job after art school by none other than Redmond Simonsen!*

*I reached out to Mr. Truman to hear the story behind his entry into SPI!*

**RHG:** *How is it you started at SPI? Were you a gamer?"*

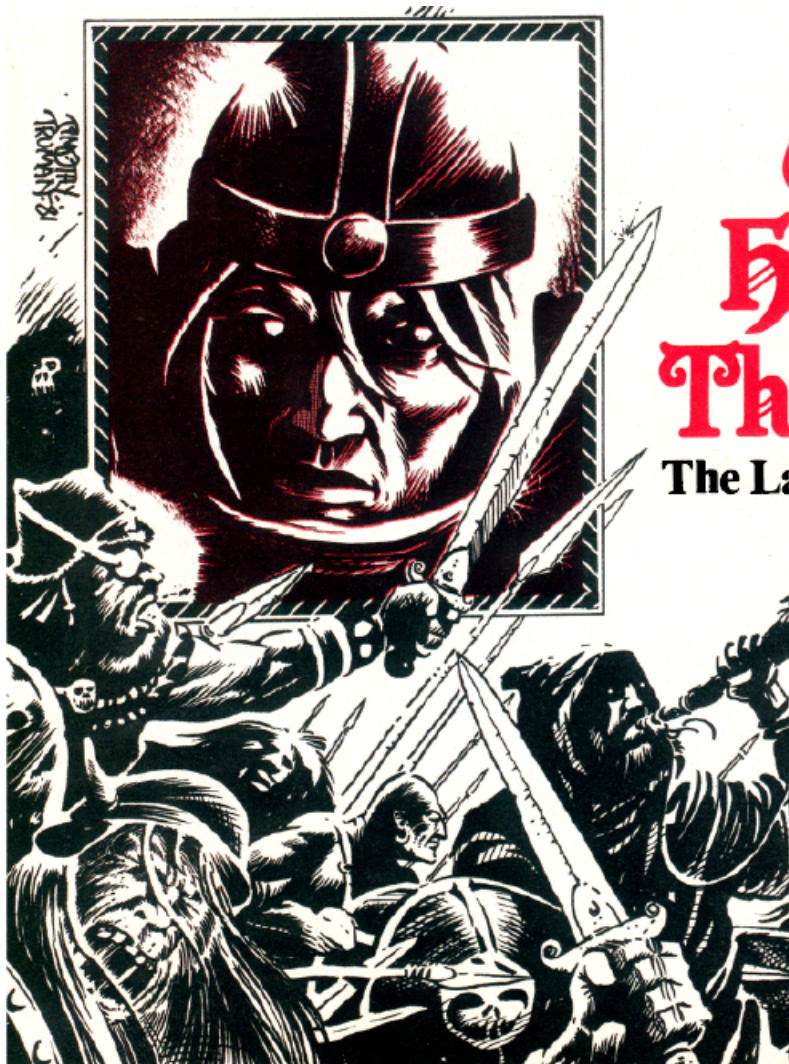
**Truman:** The week before I graduated from the Joe Kubert Art School, I'd sent out portfolios to various game companies and magazines. I'd just become aware of the role-playing game scene and market and thought it might be fun to try to get some freelance work there, given my affinity for SF and fantasy material.

SPI was the only company that responded to my submissions. I made an appointment with SPI for a face-to-face portfolio review, took the 1-hour train ride into NYC, and met with art director/publisher Redmond A. Simonsen and editor/writer/designer David Ritchie.

## **On the Cover**

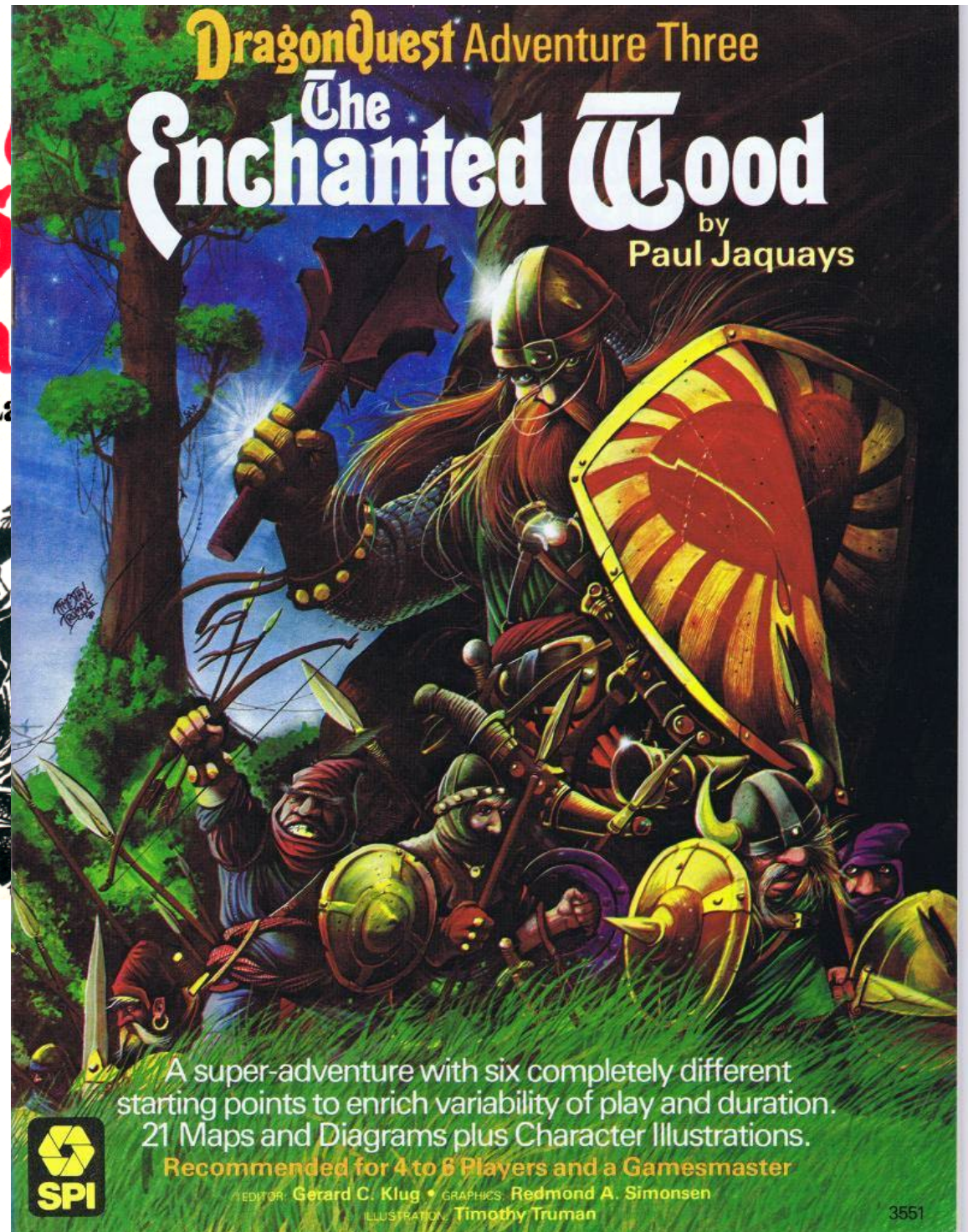
**The Sidh from *Albion: Land of Faerie* as portrayed by Timothy Truman, based on a concept by Redmond A. Simonsen.**





*Above: Truman's work would appear as Interior artwork in Ares magazine, and he scored three straight covers with issues 10, 11, and 12*

*At Right: His work is also on the modules for DragonQuest. Specifically, the cover for Enchanted Wood, and the rule sets for The Return of the Stainless Steel Rat and StarTrader.*







**Truman:** They liked my work, and I came out of the meeting with my first assignments."

I worked with SPI for about a year or so, doing work for **Ares** magazine."

**RHG:** You worked with Redmond Simonsen. What was that like?

**Truman:** I liked Redmond. I actually learned a lot from him. He could be a bit intimidating to a young 'un like I was at the time-- he was pretty brusque and no-nonsense, but in that regard, he was a straight shooter, and I've since learned that that's the sort of person I usually get along with the best, business-wise.

In my experience, there was no BS about him, and he always paid me on time. SPI never paid a lot of money, mind you, but he never stiffed me for a check. I respected him and we got along very well.

I think he liked my energy, enthusiasm & imagination, the fact that I always met deadlines and that I was a bit of an "illustrator samurai." I was TOTALLY dedicated to being a fantasy and SF illustrator. I ate, breathed, and slept it.

Also, I asked a lot of questions about the production side of stuff. I was interested in every aspect of putting a publication together, so I always asked a lot of questions and kept my ears open picking up whatever I could. This was kind of unusual for an illustrator, I suppose.

I think that Redmond and Dave liked that.

### **On the Cover**

The immortal Stainless Steel Rat as portrayed by Timothy Truman, based on a concept by Redmond A. Simonsen.



**RHG:** Clearly, Chaykin's work there is often listed as something implying 'layout by RAS, art by HC.' Did that also apply to your work?

**Truman:** Redmond usually worked up layouts for covers and wanted you to follow them. I didn't like doing things that way but learned to live with it. After a while, he started letting me do my own layouts. Plus, he never did them for interior work or the comics, just for covers and perhaps the game board fold-out sections of the magazines.

They were very rough layouts-- not at all detailed, just placement of the main compositional elements. Balloon figures, you know? After a while, he just left me to my own devices. The interior illustrations and such gave him a good idea that I could handle composition, and I think he detected that I worked better without a lot of direction. The less direction I got, the more imaginative I'd get, and that's the way that a client gets the best results from me. I didn't draw or paint too well at that point, but I guess I made up for it in imagination, energy and composition.

**RHG:** Was all your work done at a distance?

**Truman:** Not really that close, no. But Redmond and David made it a point to have a personal meeting with me in their offices, to explain things to me and to say how much they'd enjoyed working with me. I always appreciated that.

*At right: The cover of the rules folder for Stainless Steel Rat.*

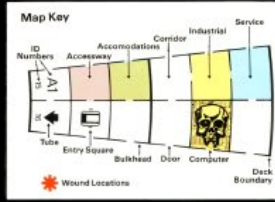
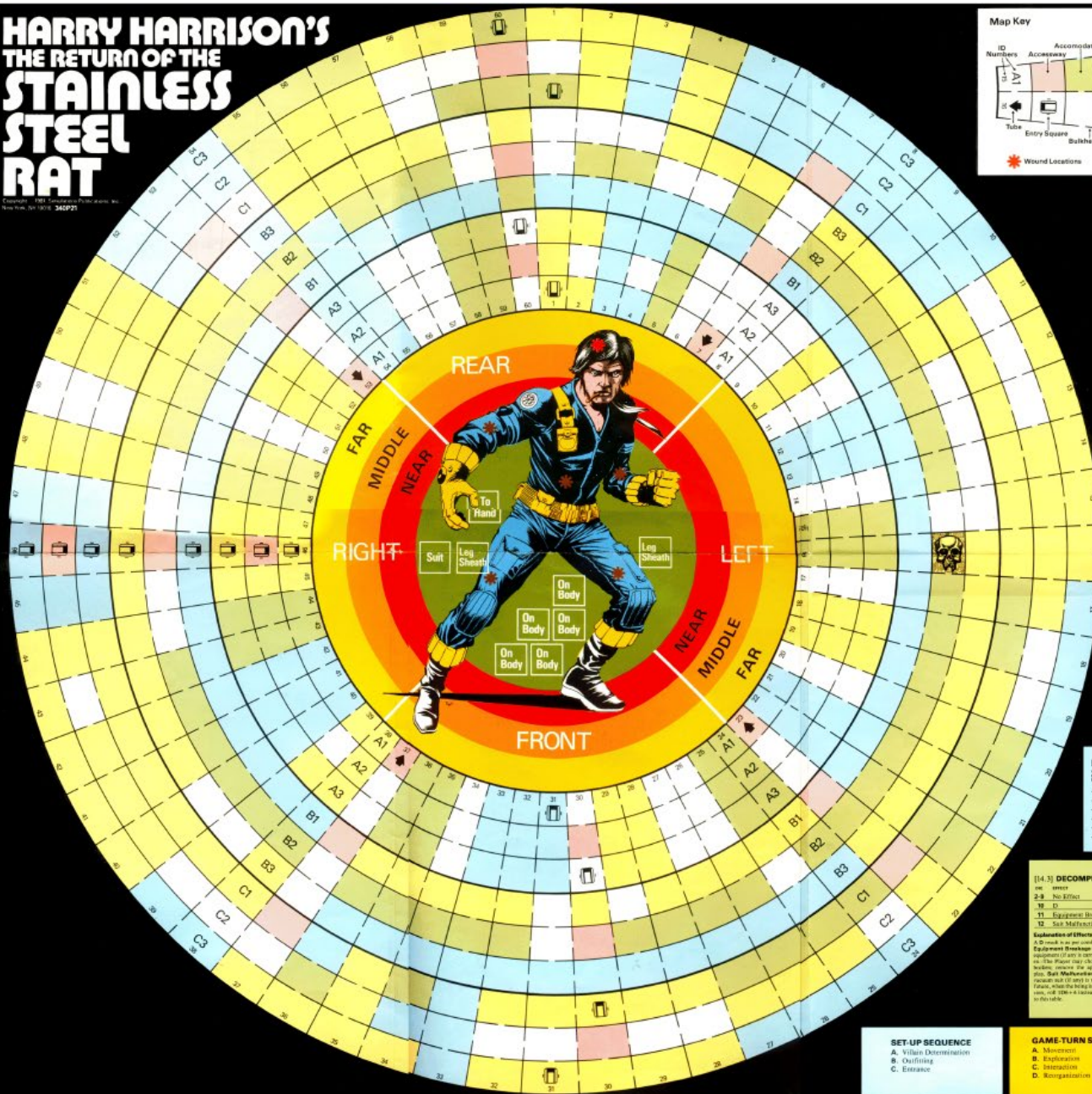
*Below: The graphic layout for the map and physical combat of The Return of the Stainless Steel Rat. The male and female combat characters were designed and drawn by Truman.*





# HARRY HARRISON'S THE RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT

Copyright © 1991, TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
TSR, Inc., 300 North Zeeb Road, Lake Geneva, IL 60047



Die-Roll Chit Box

**Jim's Suspension of Disbelief Track**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

**Jim's Alertness Track**

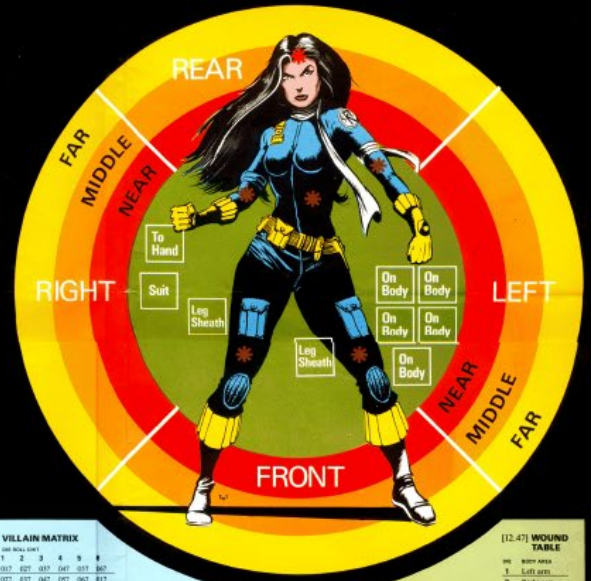
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

**Angelina's Suspension of Disbelief Track**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

**Angelina's Alertness Track**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---



**[16.25] VILLAIN MATRIX**

Weapon	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	007	007	007	007	007	007
B	007	007	007	007	007	007
C	007	007	007	007	007	007
D	007	007	007	007	007	007
E	007	007	007	007	007	007
F	007	007	007	007	007	007

Transference: The Die-Roll Chit Box with the Villain Chit Box and enter in the numbered paragraph to find the villain's ability.

**[12.47] WOUND TABLE**

Wound	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Left arm					
2	Right arm					
3	Left leg					
4	Right leg					
5	Head					
6	Body					

Wound characters is located in the area indicated by the die roll, unless the appropriate number on the table is the Wound table. If you roll an area of the body that is already wounded, roll again.

**[14.35] DECOMPRESSION TABLE**

Use	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1	1	1

**[12.56] HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT EFFECTS TABLE**

Use	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

**[12.26] WEAPONS TABLE**

Weapon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

**SET-UP SEQUENCE**

- Villain Determination
- Defining
- Entrance

**GAME-TURN SEQUENCE**

- Movement
- Deployment
- Interaction
- Reorganization

**COMBAT SEQUENCE**

- Initiative Determination Sequence
- First Being Sighted
- Movement
- Engagement
- Subsequent Being Sighted

**WEAPONS**

1. If you roll 1 to 10, you are using target weapon.

2. If you roll 11 to 12, you are using other and character's own.

3. If you roll 13 to 14, you are using other and character's own.

4. If you roll 15 to 16, you are using other and character's own.

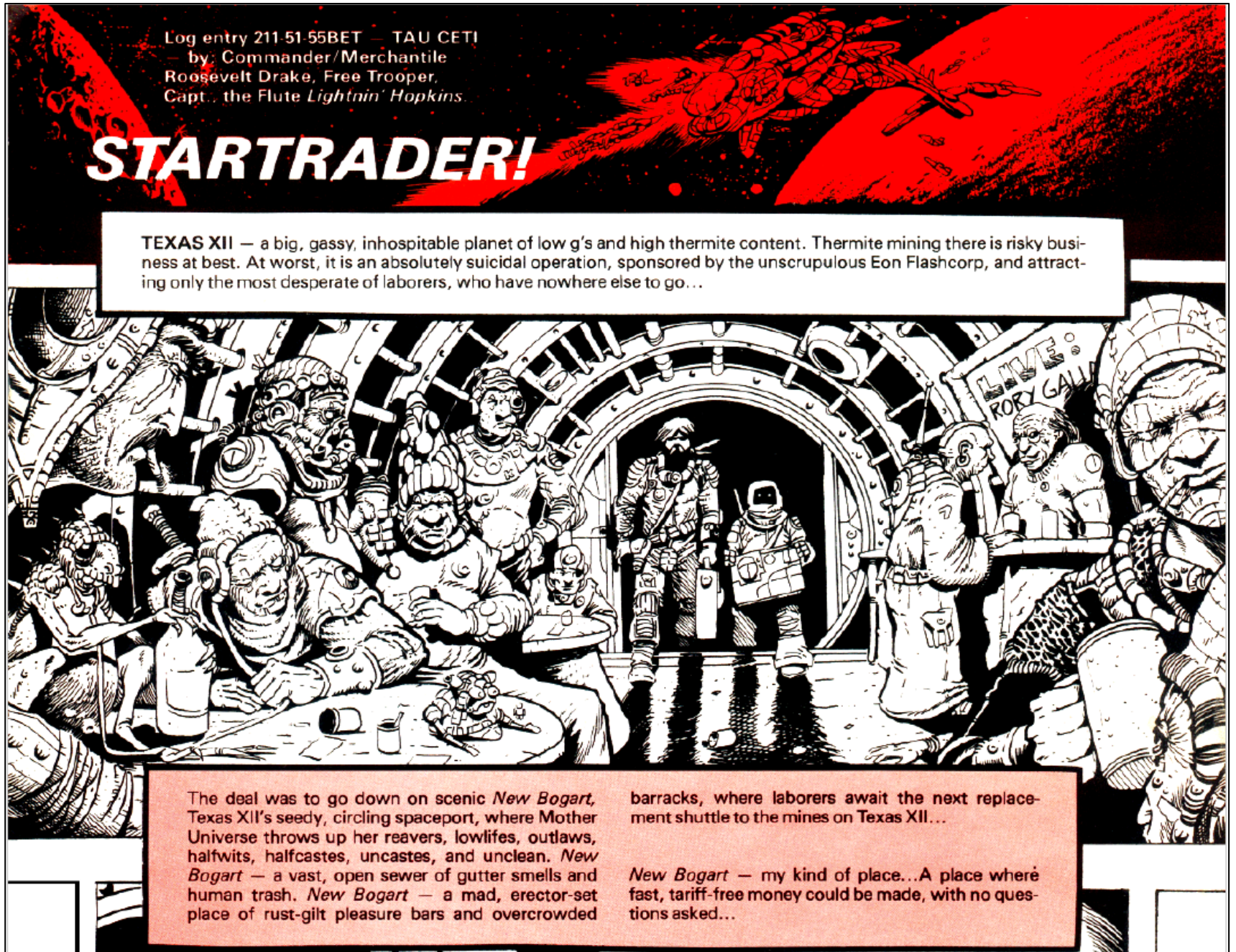
5. If you roll 17 to 18, you are using other and character's own.

6. If you roll 19 to 20, you are using other and character's own.



RHG: The idea for **Star Trader's** rules using your work – wow! How did that come about?

Truman: SPI's Dave Richie was writing and editing the game and I somehow became aware of it when I was delivering work to SPI's office. I hit them with the idea of doing a short comic to accompany the game. They liked the idea. Working with David Richie was always fun. We got along great.





**RHG:** The fact is you hit at SPI in their toughest – yet perhaps most creative times. And you were around the time SPI went bust – how much pain did that cause for you?

**Truman:** Well, I enjoyed working with them and they were certainly feeding me a lot of assignments, so I hated to see them go. On the other hand, my wife and I had a combined income of \$7000 the year that I worked with them, so I would have had to start looking for some better-paying clients anyway! However, SPI was the perfect place to get my feet wet and learn the ropes as a young illustrator, my very first year out of the gate.

**RHG:** Had you already finished all work, or were you expecting more?

**Truman:** Actually, they'd just launched *Ares* and I'd had a big idea that I'd just pitched to them: to create a sort of "mascot" for the magazine-- a Frazetta-esque "God of War" type icon that we could use for covers, T-shirts and stuff. I did a cover and some black-and-white illustrations and designs for the character, and they loved it. When they told me that the company was folding, and since I'd done the pitch on my own time, Redmond let me retain ownership of the character design. He also let me retain copyrights to the comic stories I'd done for their magazines. Later, I was able to use the *Ares* cover painting for *Killer Tales*, an anthology that I did for Eclipse. *Killer Tales* reprinted all the comics stories that I did for SPI.

**RHG:** You and Howard Chaykin would become the leading lights of First Comics within a half-decade. Did you meet him at SPI?

**Truman:** I certainly knew of Howard's work and was a HUGE fan. (He was one of my biggest influences!) However, I never ran into him in the offices at SPI. The offices were in a run-down old building on the edge of Greenwich Village, and you really didn't run into other freelancers there.


I would just take the train in, deliver work, and pick up my next assignment or use the time to make a pitch that might lead to some extra work, such as the idea to do some comics stories or to create a "mascot" for *Ares*.

I got to hang out with Chaykin at First Comics. We'd often run into each other there, and at conventions. It was great to meet him. Like I said, BIG influence. I would be almost certain that he'd moved on from SPI by the time I got there. Like I say, the pay wasn't exactly great!

An Independent Game Compatible with  
**UNIVERSE**  
The Science Fiction Role-Playing Game of the Future

# STARTRADER

## Rules of Play



**Read This First:**

The rules to *StarTrader* are organized by major topics, called Sections, arranged in the order in which they occur in the play of the game. Each such major topic is given a number and a name, following which is usually a General Rule or description that summarizes the rules in that Section. This general overview of each rules Section is followed by numbered paragraphs, called Cases, that provide specifics of the rules. Note that the numbering of the Cases is a decimal form of the Section numbers.

Players should examine the display sheet and playing pieces, and then quickly read through the rules, without trying to memorize them. The game should then be set up and a "trial run" made, with reference to the rules. Cases as questions arise. In this way, players can become accustomed to the game system easily and move quickly on to a full-fledged game of *StarTrader*.

**Rules Questions**

We hope you enjoy this SPI game. Should you have any difficulty interpreting the rules, please write to SPI, phrasing your question so that it can be answered by a simple sentence, word, or number. You must enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Write to: SPI, Rules Questions Editor for *StarTrader*, 257 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010-7366.

**Inventory of Game Components**

Each copy of *StarTrader* should contain the following components:

- One 22" x 34" display sheet
- One sheet of 200 die-cut cardboard playing pieces
- One rules folder

Each boxed copy of *StarTrader* (not the *Ares* edition) should also contain:

- Three 6-sided dice
- One game box assembly

Copyright © 1982, Simulations Publications, Inc., New York, NY 10010-7366 350P11



RHG: Many thanks for your look back at SPI in 1981. Anything I should have asked? Anything additional you'd like to add?

Truman: By the way a funny story about my first trip to SPI! It was about a 20-block walk from the NYC train station to SPI. I couldn't afford a cab, so I'd always walk it! You'd pass through the garment district, past nudie bars, lap dance dance clubs and drug dealers through some of the sketchiest areas of Manhattan.

The first trip I made, I got dressed up in a cheap suit and it was one of the hottest days of that year. I carried about every piece of art that I had in my portfolio, and it was really heavy. I was literally drenched in sweat by the time I reached SPI! It was horrible-- I was DRIPPING! looked like I'd just gone swimming, no kidding!

I excused myself while I was waiting to go into the meeting, went to the bathroom, took off my coat and shirt and used almost an entire roll of paper towels, mopping sweat off myself!

I'm sure I looked like a drowned rat or a hobo! But I came away with an assignment! -T

*RHG: Special thanks to Timothy Truman for walking us into SPI's offices in 1981 and capturing a snapshot of the people and their times!*

## On the Cover

*Star Trader* as portrayed by Timothy Truman, based on a concept by Redmond A. Simonsen.

**COMPLETE SF ADVENTURE GAME INSIDE!** Nr. 12 \$6.00

**Ares**

*All he had was his ship, his guts, and the love of everything money buys!*

# STAR TRADER

*The game of interstellar exploitation and piracy*

ALCY XG	12ht	4
ISOF	114ht	12ht
ALLC	Whi	14ht
MONN	228	12ht
ISOF	2	3ht
SOI	4z	16ht
RICE	7	10ht
	4z	7ht
CE	8	1ht

Adventure Games  
Role-Playing  
Computer Games

Star Trader Illustrated Story  
Interstellar Trade ★ Artificial Intelligence  
**Role-Playing Albion**  
Expanded game, software, and role-playing reviews  
Film review: The Time Bandits

**SPI**





Above – SPI commission, 1982

Right – SPI Ares commission, 1982





# DAMOCLES MISSION

Story by Timothy Zahn  
Illustrated by Timothy Truman  
based on a concept by  
Redmond A. Simonsen

**ABSOLUTE TOP SECRET:** *The following transcribed excerpts of the oral log of Colonel Patrick McDowell (USN) are to be seen by authorized personnel only. Failure to comply can result in a prison term of forty years and a fine of one hundred thousand dollars.*

**BACKGROUND:** *On 15 September 1988, a dark, spherical object approximately 1.2 kilometers in diameter of unknown origin assumed a geosynchronous orbit over the Galapagos Islands. Upon orders of the President, an investigating shuttle mission was configured (code name **DAMOCLES**). The Space Shuttle **Discovery** was lifted off on 2 December 1988 at 0613 hours. The crew consisted of two regular shuttle astronauts and four scientists. (See Section VIII for crew profiles.) After using the low-orbit refueling system (LORS), the **Discovery** climbed to 36,000 kilometers and matched orbits with the unknown object on 7 December at 1413 hours, docking with it at 1820 hours.*

**Compilers notes:** *In the following, the number in parentheses denotes time after*

